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C O N F I D E N T I A L USUN 3187

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UN, RQ, US

SUBJ: PUERTO RICO AND THE COMMITTEE OF 24 (C24): PLANNED

APPEARANCE BEFORE C24 BY PRESIDENT OF PUERTO RICAN

BAR ASSOCIATION

1. DURING A CALL BY PUERTO RICAN SECRETARY OF STATE JUAN ALBORS AND UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE LUIS AGRAIT ON GOVERNOR SCRANTON ON AUGUST 10 TO DISCUSS PUERTO RICAN VIEWS ON THE LOS CONFERENCE (REPORTED SEPTTEL), AGRAIT INFORMED US THAT THE BAR ASSOCIATION OF PUERTO RICO HAS DECIDED TO SEND REPRESENTATIVES TO APPEAR BEFORE THE C24 TO CRITICIZE LACK OF PROGRESS IN DEVELOPING GREATER PR AUTONOMY.

2. AGRAIT SAID THAT ALTHOUGH ALL LAWYERS WHO PRACTICE IN PUERTO RICO ARE MEMBERS OF THE BAR ASSOCIATION, ONLY A SMALL NUMBER OF ACTIVISTS, MOSTLY INDEPENDENTISTAS, ATTEND THE BAR ASSOCIATION MEETINGS. IT WAS THIS GROUP WHICH TOOK THE DECISION THAT THE PRESIDENT OF THE BAR ASSOCIATION SHOULD APPEAR BEFORE THE COMMITTEE OF 24. AGRAIT EXPLAINED THAT THE BAR ASSOCIATION STATEMENT WILL SUPPORT A RESOLUTION OF THE BAR ASSOCIATION THAT SOME OF THE AGREEMENTS CONTAINED IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION OF 1953, RECOGNIZING PUERTO RICO'S SELFGOVERNING STATUS, AND SOME OF PRESIDENT
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EISENHOWER'S PROMISES ON PUERTO RICO HAVE NOT BEEN LIVED UP TO.

3. AGRAIT ESTIMATES THAT THERE IS LITTLE HOPE THAT THE BAR ASSOCIATION DECISION WILL BE REVERSED.

4. GOVERNOR SCRANTON TOLD ALBORS AND AGRAIT HOW SERIOUSLY HE VIEWS THIS DEVELOPMENT AND THE EXTRAORDINARY DIFFICULTY IT WILL POSE FOR US IN THE COMMITTEE. REITERATING THAT IT IS USG POLICY THAT THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO ARE THE ONES WHO SHOULD DECIDE WHAT POLITICAL STATUS THEY WANT, HE ADDED THAT AN APPEARANCE BY THE BAR ASSOCIATION COULD ENCOURAGE THE ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS IN THE C24 AND THE GA WHICH WOULD RECOGNIZE A "PUERTO RICAN NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT". SUCH A DEVELOPMENT, HE SAID, COULD SERIOUSLY UNDERMINE THE PRESENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE US AND PUERTO RICO WHICH HE UNDERSTANDS IN CONSONANT WITH THE DESIRES OF THE PEOPLE OF PUERTO RICO.

5. AGRAIT PROMISED TO PROVIDE US WITH ALL AVAILABLE DOCUMENTATION ON THE BAR ASSOCIATION DECISION ASAP.
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